

THE POLICIES AND DISCOURSES OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

and their impact on the formation of teachers' identities.

CLIVE CHAPPELL

MEd. (NSW), BSc(Bristol), Grad Cert Sc Ed(London)

PhD.

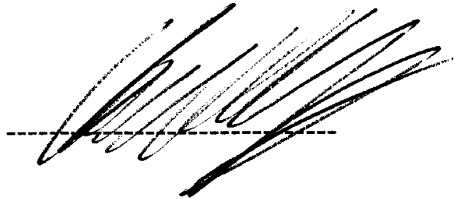
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CERTIFICATE

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature of Candidate

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and strokes, is written over a horizontal dashed line.

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ABSTRACT

Education and training, in Australia, has experienced unprecedented levels of change in recent times. Government educational policies are now dominated by economic discourses that point to the need for all educational systems to contribute to economic development, by increasing the knowledge and skill levels of the present and future workforce. The twin discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism have now transformed Australian educational systems. But the effects of this transformation on the identities of teachers working in this changed environment have not been adequately examined. This study examines the impact of government policies on teachers' identities by investigating a particular group of teachers working in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in Australia.

The study has chosen teacher identity as its focus, because much of recent research has involved investigating the new knowledge and skills required of teachers working in this changed environment. However, this can be seen as making an overly instrumental means-ends connection between teachers' knowledge and skills and the professional practice of teaching. It fails to appreciate that when teachers are asked to 'do things differently' in their everyday teaching practices they are also being called on to become different teachers. That is, to have different understandings of their role in education, to have different relationships with students, to conceptualise their professional and vocational knowledge differently. In short, to change their identity.

In order to investigate the impact of the policies and discourses of VET on TAFE teachers' identities the study locates itself, in part, within the interpretivist tradition of social research and uses the methods and methodologies of critical policy analysis, phenomenology and ethnography to investigate the research questions. It then uses a number of diverse theoretical perspectives to challenge and interrogate the interpretation made of the data gathered.

The study undertakes a critical analysis of contemporary VET policies utilising a 'policy-as-discourse' approach to the analysis and draws on the methods of phenomenology and ethnography in order to generate situated discourses that are often

overlooked in critical policy analysis. The study also uses the perspective offered by poststructuralism, which foregrounds the power of discourse in the formation of both the social world and individual identity.

The conclusions reached suggest that TAFE teacher identity is an ambiguous discursive achievement constructed out of the multiple, historical organisational and individual discourses that all circulate in teachers' life worlds. These discourses now interact in complex and contradictory ways with the contemporary policies and discourses of vocational education and training resulting in teachers experiencing a degree of doubt and uncertainty concerning their identification with the new institution of TAFE.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Context and orientation of the research.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Changes in vocational education and training.....	3
1.3 The impact of change on TAFE teachers.....	5
1.4 The focus of this research investigation.....	7
1.5 Research perspectives.....	8
1.6 An overview of the research project.....	12
1.7 Why do this study?.....	15
1.8 Why is identity the focus of this study?.....	17

CHAPTER TWO

Theorising identity.....	20
2.1 Identities in crisis.....	20
2.2 The meaning of modernity.....	22
2.3 Identity and scientific rationality.....	25
2.4 Identity and social relations.....	29
2.5 Identity and work.....	32
2.6 Identity and discourse.....	38
2.7 Summarising theories of identity.....	42
2.8 TAFE teachers' identities.....	43

CHAPTER THREE

TAFE in new times.....	46
3.1 Introduction.....	46
3.2 Post-industrial times.....	49
3.3 Post-educational times.....	54
3.4 Economic rationalism and the state.....	59
3.5 The modern educational project.....	62
3.6 The construction of technical education.....	68
3.7 TAFE an 'anagram for change'.....	73

CHAPTER FOUR

Educational research as a social practice.....	81
4.1 Reflexivity - a sign of the times.....	81
4.2 Educational research and the paradigm wars.....	85
4.3 Paradigms of social inquiry.....	89
4.3.1 Positivism and social inquiry.....	89
4.3.2 Interpretivism and social inquiry.....	93
4.3.3 Critical Theory and social inquiry.....	96
4.3.4 Postmodernism and social inquiry.....	98
4.4 Method and methodology.....	102

CHAPTER FIVE

TAFE teachers in new times - an initial investigation.....	109
5.1 Background.....	109
5.2 Demographics of the survey respondents.....	112
5.3 Analysis of responses.....	115
5.4 Interpreting the data.....	126

CHAPTER SIX

TAFE teachers in New Times - the interviews.....	132
6.1 Background.....	132
6.2 Demographics of the interviewees.....	134
6.3 Reporting the interview data -TAFE teachers.....	136
6.4 Reporting the interview data - college directors.....	144
6.4.1 Economic rationalism.....	145
6.4.2 New vocationalism.....	150
6.5 Reporting the interview data - senior head teachers.....	157
6.5.1 Economic rationalism.....	158
6.5.2 New vocationalism.....	161
6.6 Interpreting the interview data.....	167

CHAPTER SEVEN

Kate's story - phase three	170
7.1 introduction.....	170
7.2 A brief biography.....	172
7.3 Kate and new times.....	177
7.4 Personal discourses of teaching.....	181
7.5 The discourses of gender.....	191

CHAPTER EIGHT

The making of TAFE teacher identities	207
8.1 The research question in context	207
8.2 Changing discourses - changing cultures	210
8.3 A culture of uncertainty.....	212
8.4 Public service and private enterprise.....	213
8.5 New vocationalism, industry skills development and liberal education.....	216
8.6 Individual discourses and identity.....	221
8.7 Coming to a conclusion.....	225

APPENDICES

A.1 MACTEQT/TAFE taskgroup principles for quality teaching in TAFE.....	229
A.2 Survey Instrument to TAFE teachers.....	231
A.3 Interview Protocol for teachers and TAFE Managers.....	237
A. 4 Summary of survey responses.....	239

BIBLIOGRAPHY	267
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Glossary

ANTA - Australian National Training Authority

DTEC - Department of Training and Education Coordination

ITAB – Industry Training Advisory Board

MACTEQT - Ministerial Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and
the Quality of Teaching

MEST - Ministry of Education, Skills and Training

NBEET - National Board of Employment Education and Training

NCVER - National Centre for Vocational Education Research

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

TAFE - Technical and Further Education

VET - Vocational Education and Training

VEETAC - Vocational Education Employment and Training Advisory
Council